

The reconstruction of Episcopalian identity in Scotland: the renunciation of the Stuart allegiance in 1788

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Around the middle of February 1788 Episcopalians in Scotland received the news that Prince Charles Edward Stuart, son of their James VIII, and heir to the Stuart claim to the thrones of Scotland and England, had died in Rome. His claim was inherited by his brother, Henry, a Roman Catholic cardinal, who was quick to claim his birthright as Henry IX. But it was a claim that no one bothered with any more; neither the French who had supported his father and grandfather, nor the pope who had forbidden the cardinals to have any more to do with the Stuarts living in genteel poverty in the Palazzo Muti. And now the Stuart's last and most substantial body of dogged supporters,¹ the greatly reduced numbers of Scottish nonjuring Episcopalians, prepared finally also to relinquish their allegiance to the Stuart dynasty. It was ninety-nine years since that loyalty had lost them the prize of the established Church of Scotland to the Presbyterians when they elected to regard their oaths to James VII as inviolable. So how did this last remaining remnant of substantial Jacobite support cease in 1788? What does this tell us about the Episcopalian variant of Scottish identity at the end of the eighteenth century?

When the evidence for that great renunciation is examined, as I propose to do in what follows, a number of answers can be given to these

¹ Bruce Lenman, "The Scottish Episcopal Clergy and the Ideology of Jacobitism" in *Ideology and Conspiracy: Aspects of Jacobitism 1689-1759*, ed. Eveline Cruickshanks (Edinburgh, 1982), 36-48; see also Murray G. H. Pittock, "Jacobite Ideology in Scotland and at Saint-Germain-en-Laye" in *The Stuart Court in Exile and the Jacobites*, edd. Eveline Cruickshanks and Edward Corp (London, 1995) for suggestions that Jacobitism had a substantial plebeian, folk following among Episcopalians in the North-East in the first half of the eighteenth century, and was not merely the product of deference towards Episcopalian landowners.

questions about Scottish Episcopalianism in 1788. Firstly, that the smooth transition from Jacobitism to the House of Hanover portrayed in the official records is open to question. There is evidence of some strength still surviving in the Jacobitism of late-eighteenth century Episcopalianism. This suggests that such an eroded band of Scots as the Episcopalians were not homogenous, but contained a variety of outlooks. Secondly, that the 1780s were the beginning of a process of the reconstruction of Scottish Episcopalian identity, a process which culminated in the 1820s and the visit of George IV to Scotland.

So how was the Episcopalian renunciation of Jacobitism finally effected in 1788? The process was already being explored before the death of Prince Charles. It began formally within the structures of the church subsequent to the consecration of John Skinner as coadjutor Bishop of Aberdeen in 1783. The next year Skinner called meetings of the clergy of that diocese to discuss ways of securing relief from the penal laws. It is significant that Skinner's objective was not so much the revocation of Jacobitism but of finding a way around the penal laws imposed on the Episcopal Church. Sustained persecution had largely ceased with the accession of George III in 1760, but the laws passed as a result of the Jacobite rebellions of 1715, 1719, and particularly 1745, effectively still prevented the church from adopting a public life in Scotland. The acute disadvantages produced by this legislation, such as not being able to worship publicly, secure legal property, contract a legal marriage, or attract and maintain sufficient clergy to counteract the competition of the Established Church meant that the laws had drastically reduced Episcopalian numbers. It was therefore imperative that Episcopalians find a way to achieve legal toleration if their numbers were not to vanish altogether, especially when, as no doubt John Skinner and others realised, hopes of a Jacobite restoration were mere fancy by the late-eighteenth century. It is perhaps significant that it was precisely this period, from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth, that major inroads into Gaelic Episcopalianism were made by evangelical proselytism in the Highlands.²

² Rowan Strong, *Episcopalianism in Nineteenth-Century Scotland: Religious Responses to a Modernising Society* (Oxford, 2002), 84.

At a meeting of the Aberdeen clergy in Aberdeen in May 1786 Skinner told them that “the present declining state of the Church, and the great injury done to religion throughout this kingdom by means of those restrictions the clergy are laid under” meant something constructive had to be done.³ Previous meetings had not produced any realistic proposals. But the outcome of that 1786 gathering was six resolutions which passed unanimously, at least according to the minutes. It was here that the reconstruction of Jacobite Episcopalianism effectively began and that process of change was enshrined in the first two of the six resolutions.

I. That the Church of Scotland is a spiritual Society, founded by the authority of Jesus Christ the Supreme head of the Church, and derived thro’ a lineal Succession of Bishops from the Apostles, and is therefore independent of the authority and sanction of all civil powers for the continuation of that Succession; the administration of the Sacraments, and the holy offices of religion necessary to the Salvation of men; and for the government of her members by such discipline, as she shall see most conducive to their spiritual welfare.

II. That the Church of Scotland, resting upon her spiritual powers alone, cannot admit of those political attachments that have been attributed to her, and which have been made the foundation of many severe laws and restrictions; And that she has never made the profession of any particular political principles, or the adherence of any particular party, a term of communion.

The other four resolutions concerned the penal laws as having a detrimental effect on the religious profession of the church’s members and thereby eroding the religious life of the nation; that they needed to be repealed and the clergy should support that aim as a religious duty; that such a repeal could not be expected without the political support of the existing

³ Aberdeen University Library, MS 2697.1.12, fo. 13, Minute Book of the Diocese of Aberdeen, 3 May 1786.

government; and requesting other clergy to join with those of Aberdeen in petitioning the bishops accordingly.⁴

This disavowal in the second resolution of political allegiance as central to Episcopalian identity went hand-in-hand with the fifth resolution which alluded to the Realpolitik of the period. This resolution stated “that the repeal of these laws is not to be expected, without making such a declaration of the principles of this Church, as may convince those in power of the propriety of such appeal”. So without making an explicit mention of either the Stuarts or the Hanoverians, these declarations were just such an attempt to express the principles of the Episcopal Church, and to satisfy the government that the Episcopal Church was no longer, essentially, Jacobite. This was what was meant by the declaration that the Episcopal Church “has never made the profession of any particular political principles, or the adherence of any particular party, a term of communion”. It was an attempt to rewrite Episcopalian history and identity by denying the centrality of their Jacobitism.

But this was flying in the face of evident historic fact and even of the personal experience among those who had passed the resolution, not least of which was Bishop Skinner himself. In 1689 the bishops and the large body of Scots who followed them were ejected from the Church of Scotland precisely because they regarded their oaths to James VII as inviolable. They became political Jacobites for a theological reason by adhering to the orthodox Anglican theology of the doctrines of passive obedience and indefeasible hereditary succession. It was for reasons of such political theology that the Episcopalians came to constitute a separate communion in 1689, divorced from the Church of Scotland that had been home until then to both Episcopalians and Presbyterians. That the same Jacobitism, begun in 1689, still constituted a principle of communion within the Episcopal Church was a fact of life in the experience of those at the Aberdeen meeting. For example, sometime during the episcopate of Andrew Gerard (1746-67), Bishop Skinner’s father had prayed for the Hanoverians at the Sunday service and had been required to seek forgiveness from his bishop for doing so. Similarly, at Stonehaven, John Ramsay was dismissed

⁴ *Ibid.*, fos. 13-15.

from his charge for the same offence.⁵ In 1770 Skinner's colleague, Robert Kilgour, as Bishop of Aberdeen, had been implacably opposed to the appointment of a clergyman who was not a Jacobite at Lonmay, an insistence which caused a forty-year long schism in the neighbouring congregation of Fraserburgh.⁶ While younger men such as Skinner and the clergy of Aberdeen were prepared to state that Jacobitism was not a term of communion in the Episcopal Church, this was clean contrary to the experience of some clergy in recent decades who had suffered the consequences of stepping out of the Jacobite line in public. Neither would it have appealed to older men such as Kilgour who maintained their Jacobitism as a matter of sincere religious belief and consequently held the church to that religious and political creed.

In place of Jacobitism as the principle of communion within nonjuring Episcopalianism the Aberdeen resolutions advocated episcopacy as constituting the theological basis of their church. This was the intent of the first resolution which maintained that the Episcopal Church was a "spiritual Society, founded by the authority of Jesus Christ the Supreme head of the Church, and derived thro' a lineal Succession of Bishops from the Apostles, and is therefore independent of the authority and sanction of all civil powers" for its religious life. Episcopacy, it was claimed, connected the church with Jesus Christ and consequently gave the church its religious authority as having derived directly from Christ through the Apostles to the bishops and therefore as independent of the state. The resolution expressed the belief that it was episcopacy and not Jacobitism which was at the heart of the identity of Scottish Episcopalianism.

However, the Aberdeen clergy had trailed their coat and it remained to be seen if others were prepared to wear it. The resolutions were sent to the clergy in the other dioceses of the church and at the next meeting on 23 August 1786 it was reported that the response had been overwhelmingly favourable. Accordingly, a declaration was drawn up enshrining the resolutions and this was also sent to the other dioceses, that the clergy

⁵ William Walker, *The Life and Times of John Skinner, Bishop of Aberdeen and Primus of the Scottish Church* (Aberdeen, 1887), 53.

⁶ R. Neish, *Old Peterhead* (1950), 107.

might assent to it and it then be sent to the bishops at their regular Episcopal Synod.

However, here the smooth sailing of this attempt to re-rig the Episcopalian ship with new non-Jacobite sails ran aground. At a further meeting held at Linshart on 25 April 1787 the bishop reported to the clergy that on the basis of these recent responses, and “some unexpected circumstances” to pursue the matter any further was now “unseasonable”.⁷ There, for the present, the matter rested. It is not known what these “unexpected circumstances” were, but it may refer to knowledge from Rome of Prince Charles’s steep decline in health in the latter part of 1786.⁸

So what had happened to cause the declaration to falter, although its resolutions had previously received such national approval from the clergy? The answer, it seems, was the very Jacobitism that the Aberdeen resolutions had said was not a term of communion. The nineteenth-century Episcopalian biographer of Bishop David Low of Moray and Ross commented that the movement for repeal of the penal laws was prevented from going further at this stage by the Jacobite principles of the older clergy and laity.⁹ William Blatch, a Wesleyan convert, was at one time Low’s personal chaplain and was therefore in a position to learn directly from his bishop about this period when Low was the youngest priest in the diocese of Dunkeld and had therefore been involved in these developments.

But there is also another aspect to the Aberdeen strategy which suggests that Skinner and his clergy knew only too well that their plans could face Jacobite opposition from within their own church. In a letter in 1817 to Bishop Alexander Jolly of Moray, Bishop Gleig of Brechin, who had been incumbent of Pittenweem, Fife, in 1787, made a revealing comment about these repeal strategies of 1786-7. In 1787 Jolly had been a priest in the diocese of Aberdeen so it was unlikely that Gleig would have written to him anything which was substantially incorrect about the affair, even as late as 1817. According to Gleig, the Aberdeen plan fell to the ground

⁷ Aberdeen University Library, MS 2697.1.12, fo. 25, Minute Book of the Diocese of Aberdeen, 25 April 1788.

⁸ Frank McLynn, *Charles Edward Stuart: A Tragedy in many Acts* (London, 1988), 548.

⁹ William Blatch, *A Memoir of the Right Rev. David Low* (London, 1855), 29.

because it was an attempt to “get an Act of Toleration passed in our favour without obliging us to pray for the King by name”.¹⁰ Obviously, Skinner and those who thought like him had no objection to praying by explicitly for George III and the Hanoverian royal family. The only reason for attempting such a piece of political naivety can have been to salve the consciences of those Episcopalians who preferred another king “over the water” by having all Episcopalians praying for the monarch using the same anonymous formula.

It was only the death of a viable Jacobite claimant to the throne that ultimately made Episcopalian conformity to the British government possible just a year later. On the advent of the news of the prince’s death a renewed campaign for penal law repeal was taken up again at either end of the country. In Edinburgh Bishop Abernethy Drummond formally advised his clergy of the prince’s death in a letter on 8 March 1788 and called them to meet together about it. They informed their bishop formally by letter that they believed nothing now stood in the way of their allegiance to the House of Brunswick.¹¹ In the north, the synod of the diocese of Aberdeen met on 9 April and stated their readiness to also switch allegiance. Curiously, these records make no reference to the death of Prince Charles, or to the Stuarts by name. All that was officially recorded was an allusion to their Jacobite past. “It was observed that since last Synod some circumstances had happened which seemed to put it in the power of the Clergy to go [to] greater lengths for the relief of the Church than they had formerly thought themselves at liberty to do.”¹² There was a reluctance to use the Stuart name in the official record. The same reticence was also observed in the formal record of the synod of the diocese of Brechin when they were called upon to discuss the matter. These clergy went a little further than their Aberdeen counterparts, but not much. “Upon the late important Death of a certain eminent Foreigner ... the cause of the unfortunate illustrious family

¹⁰ Bishop Gleig to Bishop Jolly, 15 August 1817, in J. M. Neale, *The Life and Times of Patrick Torry DD, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld, and Dunblane* (London, 1856), 17-18.

¹¹ John Skinner, *Annals of Scottish Episcopacy* (Edinburgh, 1818), 76.

¹² Aberdeen University Library, MS 2697.1.12, fo. 31, Minute Book of the Diocese of Aberdeen, 9 April 1788.

being now in our opinion extinct, we found ourselves at liberty to transfer our allegiance to the present possessor".¹³ The few clergy who comprised the Diocese of Dunkeld felt themselves able to be a little more explicit in their official proceedings and mentioned "the death of the Chevalier St George" as their reason for being unanimously of the opinion that they could now pray by name for King George III and his royal family.¹⁴

These diocesan deliberations by the small numbers of Episcopalian clergy (the Dunkeld clergy, for example, numbered just six) ultimately resulted in a General Synod which was held in Aberdeen on 24 April 1788. This was just over three months after the prince's death and about two months since the news of it had first arrived in Scotland. The General Synod also exhibited the same reserve about naming the prince or his family as had been shown by their diocesan counterparts. They confined themselves to recording that the synod was held to determine what to do about "the late Intelligence from abroad" and concluding "that they are now at liberty to acknowledge the authority of the present Government".¹⁵ In the whole record of this General Synod there is not a single mention of the dynasty they and their forebears had served so stubbornly for a century. Having arrived at that conclusion they sent letters advising their intentions to pray for George III on 25 May 1788 to the king, to their adherents throughout Scotland, and to the Archbishops of York and Canterbury. They also wrote to two English clergymen. These two clerics were presumably those priests whose little congregations constituted the rump of the English nonjurors who were still in communion up to that time with their Scottish counterparts.¹⁶ Unlike the other letters, a copy of this letter was not entered into the official minute of the synod, perhaps because they felt a need to express in it more explicit sentiments regarding the Stuarts than to their other correspondents?

¹³ Quoted in John Paul Hill, *The Episcopal Chapel at Muchalls* (London, 1956), 25-6.

¹⁴ National Library of Scotland, Dep. 251, no. 24, fo. 103-4, Minutes of the Dunkeld Synod, 2 April 1788.

¹⁵ National Archives of Scotland, CH12.60.1, fo. 49, Minute Book of the College of Bishops in Scotland, vol. 1, 1743-1821.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Why was there such official reticence about the Stuart allegiance? At first glance it appears out of keeping with the century-long dogged and public conviction of the nonjuring Episcopalians that indefeasible hereditary right made it impossible for the Stuart claim to the throne to be supplanted. It was a well-known devotion that had brought upon them severe depredation for being open Jacobites. The state had eroded their numbers by successive penal laws that whittled away their ability sustain themselves publicly as a church; while the Established Church had proselytised their adherents worn down by a lack of chapels and religious services when the parishes of the established Church remained a viable local alternative. From one-third of Scots in 1689 Episcopalians had been abraded to less than 3 per cent of the nation by the 1780s. All this had largely come about through their Jacobite loyalty. So why were they prepared to let it go without so much as an official nod, let alone a prayer, for their old royal family?

Obviously, there is a difference between the actual debates in the synods and their formal records, and no doubt Jacobite ideology and theology had a good airing in the synods' discussions. But that does not explain the extreme reserve of the records, such as referring to the object of their nonjuring faithfulness as "a certain eminent Foreigner". To some extent I believe this can be attributed to the culture of public caution that had grown up in Episcopalianism in the penal eighteenth century. Episcopalians had learned during that time that it did not pay to draw unnecessary attention to themselves and the habit was still ingrained in 1788. In addition, the records of the synods were potentially public documents, and in staking a claim to be considered loyal subjects once more they did not want to draw attention to their former allegiances by recording any existing affection for the Stuarts. In other words, the official records certainly erred on the side of caution. The same official circumspection can be seen in those dioceses that kept synod minutes during 1745-6, and in the records of the Episcopal college, where one looks in vain for any mention of the last great Jacobite rebellion of the '45.¹⁷

¹⁷ See National Library of Scotland, Dep. 251, no. 23, Proceedings of the Episcopal Synod of Dunblane, which ceases in 1743; National Library of Scotland, Dep. 251 no.24 fos. 60-61, Minutes of the District of Dunkeld, 1743-1831; Aberdeen University

But we do need to be wary of these records in another way. With respect to their reported unanimity among the clergy over the relinquishing of their Jacobitism there are grounds for suspicion. The example of one Jacobite clergyman is cautionary in this regard. Andrew Cruickshank, minister at Alloa in 1781, refused to observe the day of fast ordered by the government. Like other staunch Jacobites Cruickshank believed that to do so would have constituted a quasi-recognition of the Hanoverian regime and a softening of Episcopalian Stuart loyalty. He wrote to his cousin, "Let me also tell you that some of the Edinburgh Clergy are for having me banished from the country for not having observed the fast".¹⁸ Yet in 1788, as minister of Muthill, this previously unwavering Jacobite nevertheless resolved to obey the requirement of his bishops and to begin praying publicly for the Hanoverian monarchy. Cruickshank is a warning to historians not to believe simplistically the near official unanimity recorded among the clergy about the new royal loyalty. There may well have been others, like Cruickshank, who had to choose between two divergent fidelities; to their bishops and the decision of their church, as against their traditional Jacobitism. By choosing to obey their bishops and pray for the Hanoverians despite their own beliefs such men as Cruickshank embodied their church's claim that it was more fundamentally episcopal than it was Jacobite.

So the example of Cruickshank raises a question mark over the official picture of a seamless and smooth transfer of Episcopalian loyalties in 1788. It suggests that there may well have been others who were sincere Jacobites but kept their sentiments suppressed when it came to making a choice in 1788, either out of a greater loyalty to the decision of their church,

Library, MS 2697.1.12, Minute Book of the Diocese of Aberdeen, 1743-1840; National Archives of Scotland CH12.60.1, fos. 13-17, Minute Book of the College of Bishops in Scotland, vol. 1 1743-1821, which records the years 1743 and 1747 but nothing between these years. Probably most Episcopalian clergy were too preoccupied with the unfortunate consequences of the Jacobite rebellion in 1746 to hold any meetings of an official nature, but this would not apply to 1745 with the immediately successful outcome of the Jacobite army in Scotland.

¹⁸ As quoted in John M. C. Hannah, "A Short History of St. John's Church, Alloa", typescript (Alloa, 1969), 12, New College Library, University of Edinburgh.

or because they realised their futility once the last realistic Stuart claimant had died. Beneath the few public dissenters there lurked at least a number of others who were private ones. Yet the interpretation offered by Episcopalian historians remains that of a massively uncontested shift of allegiance. John Skinner senior, in his ecclesiastical history of 1788, was the earliest to describe the political transition of his church as unanimous and uniform.¹⁹ Thomas Stephen, in his history of the Episcopal Church published in 1845, regarded the death of Prince Charles as something Episcopalian had long looked for as a means to put an end to their legal penalties. Accordingly, he said, the change was made with “the greatest unanimity”.²⁰ John Parker Lawson’s substantial ecclesiastical history maintained the new allegiance was “performed spontaneously”.²¹ It was left to the doyenne of Episcopalian historians in the nineteenth century, George Grub, to point out that, despite such claims, Jacobitism was sufficiently strong to prevent Episcopalian accepting the Hanoverian dynasty while Prince Charles was still alive, and that there were a few laity who demurred even then.²² The traditional historic interpretation is still being used by some modern historians of Jacobitism. Daniel Szechi, for example, points to nonjuring Jacobitism wasting away with the Episcopal Church after Culloden in a process of gradual disillusionment and prefers to comment more on loyalty to Charles Stuart among Scottish Catholics than among Episcopalian after the mid-1750s.²³

Indeed, the volte face of the Episcopalian in 1788 was more nuanced than this accepted picture of unanimity. Some of the clergy, probably most, like Bishop Skinner and his father, had moved theologically out of the

¹⁹ John Skinner, *An Ecclesiastical History of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1788), 688-9.

²⁰ Thomas Stephen, *A History of the Church of Scotland from the Reformation to the Present Time* (London, 1845), 412-13.

²¹ John Parker Lawson, *A History of the Scottish Episcopal Church from the Revolution to the Present Time* (Edinburgh, 1843), i, 335.

²² George Grub, *An Ecclesiastical History of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1860), iv, 101-2.

²³ Daniel Szechi, *The Jacobites: Britain and Europe 1688-1788* (Manchester, 1994), 130-2.

traditional religious Jacobitism of their church by the 1780s, or even before. Suggestive of the thinking of this group was an extract preserved among the papers of Bishop Alexander Jolly of Moray who was at the time minister at Turriff. It came from John Lindsay's *A short history of the regal succession, and the rights of the several kings recorded in the Holy Scriptures, etc.* which had been through four editions by 1731 and was originally published in 1717.

Tho' conquest, in itself, is but a false gloss put on the worst and blackest of crimes, injustice, robbery, and cruelty, and therefore can give no prince any better title to a crown than any highwayman has to any purse he can catch: yet 'tis agreed by all casuists that power, however unlawfully obtained, may be legitimated and commence authority, either by express revelation from God Almighty, as that of Saul, David, and Solomon did, or by the utter extinction and failure of all those who have a prior right, like that of Ahaziah, above mentioned, or else by the submission and disclaimer of them to whom the crown of right belongs: in any of which cases, it is agreed, the possessor becomes authorized and entitled to the allegiance of his subjects, by what means soever he became possessed of the power; because he then requires nothing of them but what is in their own power, and they are liberty to pay him, without doing wrong to any third person: for that is the great objection against submission to power *de facto*, so long as there are any others claiming it *de jure*.²⁴

Presumably, Jolly kept this quote because he agreed with it. It indicates that, for Jolly, it was clearly the fact that Prince Charles had died without a legitimate heir to the Stuart's royal claims that was crucial in his accepting the Hanoverians. Nor was this failure of Charles Stuart just some unfortunate accident to a believer in the providential rule of God over history like Jolly and Episcopalian clergy. It was a result that was capable of being

²⁴ Quoted in John Archibald, *The Historic Episcopate in the Columban Church and in the Diocese of Moray* (Edinburgh, 1893), 227-8.

judged a divine indication that legitimate right had passed in this way to the Hanoverian dynasty now in possession of the British throne for three generations.

This becomes clearer in a letter Jolly wrote to one of the Scottish bishops on 15 April 1788. He began the letter with the clear statement, "The Death of the King without lawfull [*sic*] Issue is now past a Doubt, & the Object of our Allegiance is in consequence chang'd". In the letter Jolly admitted that the right to the throne the Episcopalians accorded Prince Charles now devolved to his brother but that he believed because Henry Stuart was a Roman Catholic cardinal he forfeited his right to the throne on a number of accounts. As a priest and particularly as a celibate he put himself beyond a throne in this world and especially one that depended on succession by primogeniture. Henry's clerical function incapacitated his regal one. However, should Henry renounce his clerical status then Episcopalians would be bound to give him their allegiance. In thinking which clearly reflects the influence of Lindsay's work Jolly asserted that as the remaining Stuart prince remained a cardinal then the right to rule devolved upon the present possessor of the throne. But while George III had a claim on their loyalty as the throne's incumbent, it was a far lesser one than that of a hereditary claimant. Jolly asked, "What claim then has the present Occupier of the British Throne to our Allegiance? He does not challenge it as Hereditary Monarch, nor pretend to govern with uncontrollable [*sic*] power. He is limited in his Government by the Constitution & the power of the people, Nobles, & Commons, represented by the two Houses of Parliament, & may be set aside & another approved in his place if he prove incorrigible." According to Jolly, since the Revolution the supreme power in the state lay no longer with the king alone, but with the monarch, lords, and commons and therefore the monarch was due only limited submission as being only one part of the sovereign power. This was a different state of affairs than prior to the Revolution when indefeasible hereditary succession meant that the subject was only left with passive obedience and non-resistance, or prayers and suffering as a defence against tyranny. "He [Cardinal Henry Stuart] therefore does not Answer the Scriptural Idea of a King, whose word is with power, & none may say unto him, What Dost Thou? He does not possess that higher power which is ye

irresistable [*sic*] Ordinance of God, & which whoever resists, shall receive to himself Damnation. Rom 13.”²⁵

Jolly’s letter indicates that the religious basis for Jacobitism was still intact in 1788, even among supporters of the new Hanoverian allegiance. Jolly appears to have convinced himself that he could renounce his Jacobite allegiance only because Charles had not left an heir who was free to marry and that this brought an end to the Stuart’s claim of indefeasible hereditary succession. Lacking such a legitimate hereditary successor to the Stuarts, Episcopalians were consequently at liberty to pray for the present limited and constitutional rulers of Britain. They would pray for George III as a monarch “veiled not with the Authority of a Scriptural King, but a Ruler responsible to the people in the Exercise of his Government”. It was the will of God to have quiet and orderly government and the only way this could now be secured, Henry having made himself ineligible for the throne, was the pray for the present government for the attainment of these ends.²⁶ It seems that, even in 1788, Jolly retained a traditional Jacobite preference for a monarch with indefeasible hereditary right to the throne to whom could be accorded passive obedience. This is another indication of the substance of Jonathan Clark’s contention of the maintenance of an “Anglican” political theology throughout the “long” eighteenth century.²⁷

Jolly’s letter also indicates why the change of allegiance was impossible while Prince Charles survived. According to the Episcopalian historian John Parker Lawson even older Episcopalians did not regard Charles as king.²⁸ But Jolly’s letter unambiguously grants him this title and his whole argument would have made no sense if Prince Charles was not thought by Jolly to be the legitimate British sovereign. Yet these Jacobite sentiments came from one of the younger Episcopalians in 1788 and one who quite readily jettisoned his Jacobite allegiance once Charles had died. Likewise, Bishop Abernethy Drummond of Edinburgh, a firm supporter

²⁵ National Archives of Scotland, CH12.14.51, fo. 4, Rev. Jolly to Bishop B[uchan of Ross and Moray?], 5 April 1788.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, fos. 4-7.

²⁷ Jonathan Clark, *English Society 1688-1832* (Cambridge, 2nd edn., 2000).

²⁸ Lawson, *History*, 323.

for the campaign for legal toleration, remained uneasy about seeking redress while it was conditional upon taking an oath of abjuration of the Stuarts during Charles's lifetime.²⁹ It would appear that rather more Episcopalians than their historians have recognised still thought themselves to be religious Jacobites and subjects of a Charles III while he lived. It was his death with no acceptable heirs that gave the Episcopalians their much-needed opportunity to change their loyalty.

However, among the older generation there remained a Jacobitism that was more than merely nominal but retained an importance for their Episcopalian identity even in the 1780s. Episcopalian historians have generally drawn attention to the fact that only two of the clergy ventured publicly to react against the renunciation of the Stuart allegiance. It was a protest enabled by the actions of the senile Bishop Charles Rose of Dunblane. When James Brown, the clergyman at Montrose, sought out Rose to confer upon himself episcopal ordination in order to perpetuate a nonjuring Jacobite succession this has been portrayed as an idiosyncratic act having little or so significance.³⁰ Brown did travel to Rose's cottage at Douane and was apparently and uncanonically ordained a bishop by Rose alone. When the ancient Rose was asked if he had done so he laid the blame on his housekeeper, saying, "My sister may have done it, but not I".³¹ But on the basis of that ordination Brown in turn ordained one Donald MacIntosh, an accomplished Gaelic scholar. It was MacIntosh who sustained a continued congregation of nonjurors in Edinburgh, and there was also another nonjuring priest in Glasgow for a brief period.³² MacIntosh died in 1808 predeceased by Brown in 1791.³³ This marked the ultimate demise of Episcopalian Jacobitism.

But beyond these clergy there were more signs of a genuine retention of Jacobitism among older generations of Episcopalian laity, and not just

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 335.

³⁰ Walker, *John Skinner*, 59; John Skinner, *Annals*, 83.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Andrew Macwhirter, "Lesser Known Church Law Cases" in *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, ix (1955), 152.

³³ David M. Bertie, *Scottish Episcopal Clergy 1689-2000* (Edinburgh, 2000), 16, 87.

among those few who chose to attend the ministry of Donald MacIntosh in the chapel in Baillie Fyfe's Close in Edinburgh. When the sincere Jacobite Alexander Cruickshank resolved to adhere to his bishops and to pray for the Hanoverian dynasty he met with a determined opposition from one of his leading laymen. It had been Cruickshank's habit to hold services in Strathearn at the house of the Jacobite Laird of Gask. On hearing of Cruickshank's desertion to the other side Oliphant of Gask sent back the preaching gown which Cruickshank had kept at his house and brought services there to a summary halt.³⁴ There were common tales of congregations signifying their objections to the usurping Hanoverians by blowing their noses, murmuring, shuffling their feet, or refusing to kneel during prayers for the royal family. Some even went so far as to protest more forcefully during the services, such as one elderly Gael in Ballachulish. She stood up and reprimanded the Rev. Paul MacColl, threatening to throw her stool at him if he did not pray for the Stuarts.³⁵ There were some strong feelings about the issue among the Episcopalian laity in the north and west of the country. One elderly man gleefully gave his conforming clergyman this retort when George III suffered his first attack of insanity soon after the Episcopalians had begun to pray for him. "Ye see what ye've done, the honest man has never had a day to do weel, since ever ye took him by the hand." Another well-known member of St Paul's, Carrubber's Close in Edinburgh, continued to attend worship but always got up from his knees during the prayers and remained standing until the prayers for the king and the royal family were completed. These stories come from William Blatch's biography of Bishop Low and is significant that Blatch admits that there were a number of other examples he could have mentioned, but that he did not do so because they were "more bitter".³⁶ Clearly, objections to the renunciation of the Stuarts were more keenly felt than Episcopalian historians were willing to admit.

³⁴ J.H. Shepherd, *Episcopacy in Strathearn* (Dumfries, 1907), 37.

³⁵ J.B. Craven, *Records of the Dioceses of Argyll and the Isles 1560-1860* (Kirkwall, 1907), 281.

³⁶ Blatch, *David Low*, 31-2.

But the overturning of their Jacobitism was crucial to the campaign to remove the penal laws imposed on the Episcopal Church. As Bishop Skinner realised, there could be no hope of this legal shift without a corresponding political one on the part of his church. In doing so the Episcopalians were undoubtedly facilitated in the alteration of their allegiance by the fact that Charles Stuart's successor was a cardinal in the Roman church. Obviously, it was not his Catholicism that excluded Henry Stuart from the throne in the eyes of his prospective Episcopalian subjects, for they had given their continued homage to his equally Catholic grandfather, father, and brother. But Henry being a celibate priest of that church had put him beyond the pale as far as Scottish Episcopalians were concerned. That fortuitous circumstance made it possible for the Episcopalians finally to seek legal toleration and assume an unrestricted public life for the first time in a century when a Relief Act was finally passed in 1792. The Act required some further changes to Episcopalian identity which were finally approved at a convention in 1804. At that Convention of Laurencekirk the church accepted the English Thirty-nine articles as its theological standard, though not without some reservations about their Calvinism; and the Book of Common Prayer as an alternative to its own Eucharist liturgy, the Scottish Communion Office.

The renunciation of the Stuart allegiance in 1788 was the keystone in a longer period of the reconstruction of Episcopalian identity which saw the church officially deconstruct its Jacobitism as the basis of its existence and construct a new identity for Scottish Episcopalianism. Nonjuring religious Jacobitism was effectually replaced by a theological attachment to episcopacy as the basic principle for what constituted Scottish Episcopalianism. It was a reconstruction with its origins in the Episcopal Synod of 1743 which had brought together the feuding diocesan and college parties among the bishops. At that synod the principle of bishops being appointed without royal nomination had given the church a diocesan episcopal government in all but name and law.³⁷ That emerging episcopal identity was fostered throughout the penal years when the sole authority of

³⁷ Rowan Strong, *Alexander Forbes of Brechin: The First Tractarian Bishop* (Oxford, 1995), 8-10.

the bishops became the only effective means of governing the scattered congregations.

But it was not until the demise of the last effective Stuart claimant to the throne that the Episcopalians were willing to reconstruct their official identity around the theology of episcopacy and episcopal succession in place of their Jacobitism. Only the death of the childless Charles enabled them to renounce the Stuarts without doing too much violence to their previous Jacobite theology and self-understanding. The process of acquiring a new identity which was viable for the long-term survival of Episcopalianism in Scotland necessitated that something replace Jacobitism and that could only be the other principle for which they had also suffered. Episcopacy, as much as Jacobitism, had drawn upon them the ire, the resources, and the proselytism of the Established Church, particularly after 1745.³⁸

However, the taint of a century of disloyalty was not easily removed as witnessed by the four years it took for Episcopalians and their few political friends to rescind the penal legislation even after they had proclaimed their new royal conformity in Sunday prayers. In order for the reconstruction of Episcopalian identity to be successful something had to be done about their Jacobite past. It had to be reinterpreted to serve them better in their new loyal future. That historical reconstruction was only finally achieved in 1822 with the visit of King George IV to Scotland.

The royal visit gave the Episcopalians an unprecedented opportunity to proclaim their publicly new devotion and they seized the moment with both hands. During their first appearance at an audience before this latest representative of their new royal dynasty they presented the king with a loyal address which rewrote their own history.

Within the wide compass of your Majesty's dominions, are no where to be found hearts more loyal than those which beat in the breasts of Scottish Episcopalians ... should evil days come upon your Majesty's Royal House (which may God of his infinite mercy avert,) the House of Brunswick will find that the Scottish Episcopalians are ready to endure for it as much as they have suffered for the House of Stuart, with heart and hand, to convince the world that in their breasts a firm

attachment to the religion of their fathers is inseparably connected with unshakeable loyalty to their king.³⁹

Their former Jacobinism was reconstructed. Instead of its previous rebellion it became a sign of the strength of Episcopalian loyalty to whomsoever they gave their homage, in this case their new Hanoverian allegiance. Now that the Episcopalians had given the House of Brunswick their loyalty their previous tenacious Jacobitism indicated just how firm such loyalty could be. Former conscientious rebels made for equally principled subjects. The revision of a disreputable past in order to fit a different present was not unique to the Episcopalians in Scotland. Colin Kidd has drawn our attention to the way in which Presbyterian historians in the eighteenth century also revised their history. They did so in order to write out of it the previous tradition of Presbyterian political radicalism that was so embarrassing after the Revolution of 1688-9.⁴⁰

Tradition is capable of being reinvented as much as invented afresh. Historian Eric Hobsbawm has defined "invented tradition" as a set of practices deliberately devised so that their repetition inculcates certain values or behaviours by their claim to continuity with the past.⁴¹ However, an invented tradition can also mean a conscious revision of a customary way of understanding the past, as distinct from any enacted or repetitive ritual. By reconstructing for the needs of the present the way the past is understood new values can be inculcated which are more appropriate to contemporary life. In other words, the past can be reinvented in order to make it more appropriate to the needs of the present by consciously reinterpreting its more embarrassing aspects. Episcopalian Jacobitism had been just such a tradition. It had been alive for a century, more than long enough to have hatched attitudes even at a popular level which were now

³⁸ Strong, *Episcopalianism in Nineteenth-Century Scotland*, 80-3.

³⁹ Grub, *Ecclesiastical History of Scotland*, iv, 172-3.

⁴⁰ Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity 1689-c.1830* (Cambridge, 1993), chs. 5 & 8.

⁴¹ *The Invention of Tradition*, edd. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge, 1983), 1.

awkward to say the least to a church seeking to protest its new-found loyalism. It was hardly suitable to a new loyalist present, for example, for Episcopalian peasants in the North East to perpetuate a traditional smuggling activity against government revenue on the basis they were “despoiling the Egyptians”.⁴²

For the Episcopalians their Jacobite past could not simply be denied or ignored, despite its problems for their Hanoverian conformity. However, that Jacobite past could be reinterpreted so as to disguise the shift from rebellion to loyalty. So reinterpretation functioned as a disguise in order to make that shift more palatable to adherents who had been influenced by the older paradigm, and as a means of making former antagonists among the conforming establishment more amenable to the Episcopal Church's desire to come in from the rebellious cold.

However, in order to succeed such a reinvention of tradition required the imprimatur of the highest authority of any group undertaking such a reinvention. This seems to have been necessary for any widespread acceptance. In the case of the Episcopalians, this was their bishops who had exercised a monopoly of authority during the Jacobite eighteenth century. As it was the same authorities which initiated and promoted both the change from the traditional Jacobite allegiance, and the reinvention of that Jacobite past, it was a successful shift. Led by those in authority such a reconstruction of Episcopalian tradition permitted those Episcopalians such as Andrew Curickshank, who were caught between traditional loyalties and a loyalty to authority, to accept the new tradition on the basis of their higher loyalty to the bishops. In this way the aim of the bishops in promoting the reinvented tradition was achieved. This was the maintenance of the social cohesion of their group despite having to conform to the requirements of a dominant political culture which had been previously hostile.

Ultimately, of course, it was an Episcopalian belated surrender to realities of the established political culture which had been in power since 1689. It was a surrender which had become necessary because of the failure of direct confrontation by way of Jacobite rebellion. It demonstrates the way in which a minority group has to adapt itself for survival in an

⁴² Strong, *Episcopalianism in Nineteenth-Century Scotland*, 65.

antagonistic hegemonic culture. If it cannot sustain direct confrontation, such a minority group must alter its world-view, its tradition, to make it conform to the dominant culture. In other words, this reinvention of tradition was also a reinvention of identity in which the fundamental nature of that identity shift was disguised by claiming continuity with the past. Throughout the eighteenth century Episcopalians were known to be Jacobites. The question was now, how to be Episcopalian without being Jacobite? Consequently, the reinvention of this tradition meant the Episcopalianism of the nineteenth century was not the same as that of the eighteenth. There was a new identity consciously invented and promoted for Episcopalians by their leadership that enabled the community to survive and grow in a new present, amongst a prevailing political culture they could not defeat but could only adapt to or die. Reinvention enabled this Christian group to choose life over death.

This revision of their Jacobite history was the final brick in the arch of a new Episcopalian identity which had been capped by the renunciation of the Stuarts. On one side of the arch their past was remade into an argument for Episcopalian loyalty in the present; on the other side the great renunciation of 1788 had enabled them to construct a new positive identity around a theological attachment to bishops as successors of the apostles. Through this archway of a new identity Episcopalian Scots could walk forward to a new public life in the challenges of the nineteenth century and beyond. However, for Episcopalian Scots the compromises their church had been forced to make in their native liturgical tradition as a condition for the 1792 Relief Act,⁴³ and in their leaders' growing eagerness in the nineteenth century for assimilation to the Church of England, would occasion one last defeat for that home-grown form of Scottish religion. This Anglicization successfully enabled them to be portrayed by other Scots as a foreign "English" kirk. This characterization of the Episcopal Church as

⁴³ The legal conditions of the Act required the Episcopal Church to assent to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. Bishop Skinner had some difficulty obtaining the clergy's consent to this conformity with the English church as clergy expressed reservations about the Calvinism of a number of the articles which they saw as contrary to their received theological tradition.

English was ironic in view of the tradition of Scottish nationalism which Scots Episcopalians had so strenuously upheld in their penal years.⁴⁴ The renunciation of the Stuarts in 1788 was a victory for Bishop Skinner and similar Episcopalian political pragmatists which was undoubtedly necessary for Scottish Episcopalianism's survival in any substantial numbers. But in terms of the maintenance of Episcopalianism as a genuine Scottish identity in the nineteenth century it was a somewhat pyrrhic victory.

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⁴⁴ Murray G. H. Pittock, *Jacobitism* (Houndmills, 1998), 129. See also Strong, *Episcopalianism in Nineteenth-Century Scotland*, ch. 7.